

For Immediate Release

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WATERVILLE AREA FIRST COMMUNITY TO ENVISION 'SUSTAINABLE' FUTURE

In three-day forum, sixty representative members from area communities, governments, businesses, universities, and non-profits will meet to address energy conservation and sustainability goals for the greater Waterville area.

The event will be held at the Waterville Opera House, 9am-5pm Jan. 17-19. In addition to the invited participants, area residents are invited to attend or to submit ideas at the event or online at www.waterville-me.gov.

The 'Community Catalyst for Energy Conservation and Sustainability' was planned by the Waterville Sustainability Committee (WSC), a group formed in 2007 to promote 'green' initiatives in Waterville. An anonymous mid-Maine donor, Colby College and the towns of Fairfield, Oakland, Waterville and Winslow provided funding for the event.

Henry Beck D-76, Chairman of the WSC, says the aim of the event is "to produce real action plans [to address sustainability], but also to share ideas and learn from each other and from different viewpoints."

It will be the "absolute first time" an energy and sustainability community catalyst has ever been held according to Jim Lemmel, an event facilitator from Running Start Institute. Running Start operates community catalysts throughout the US and will run the Waterville event this weekend.

"It's my impression that a lot of communities would like to hold an event like this but just don't know how to do it," says Lemmel. "The catalyst in Waterville could serve as a model for other communities to follow," he says.

WSC member Sally Harwood has been part of community catalysts before and is excited for the momentum the event will give to solving the "timely and critical issues" of peak oil and climate change. Harwood says the catalyst process helps communities arrive at a consensus for action in days instead of the months or even years it would take with meetings.

Harwood is not alone in thinking energy and sustainability issues are of growing concern to Maine communities. Currently, over 50 Maine municipalities are committed to reducing energy use and climate change emissions, up from a handful just a few years ago.

Waterville City Manager Mike Roy has served on the WSC since its inception and is looking forward to the outcomes of the event.

"Communities and individuals can make a difference," says Roy. "Our work on the Catalyst will show that we do not have to wait for state or federal initiatives to take action; in fact, we can provide the leadership to spur others to act."

More Information

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